

In the Claims:

1. (Previously Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the elongated plate [backing] member comprises a contoured support attached to the second surface.

3. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the front [non-planar] surface comprises a contoured portion that provides a compressed shape of the compressible layer that approximately corresponds with an anticipated shape of the portion of the user's body.

4. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the front [non-planar] surface comprises a contoured portion having a radius of curvature within the range from approximately 1.5 inches to approximately 7.0 inches.

5. (Previously Amended): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the first surface comprises a concave portion adapted to engage a portion of the user's body.

6. (Currently Amended): A pad assembly for an exercise machine, comprising:

a compressible layer having a first surface adapted to engage a portion of a user's body and a second surface opposite from the first surface; and

an elongated plate [backing] member of approximately uniform thickness having front and back surfaces, the front [a non-planar] surface being engaged with the second surface of the compressible layer, and wherein the front [non-planar] surface of the elongated plate [backing] member is shaped to provide an approximately uniform-thickness portion of the compressible layer when a compression force is applied to the first surface during an exercise.



25315
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7. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the approximately uniform-thickness portion is co-extensive with a portion of the first surface adapted to engage the portion of the user's body.

8. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the front [non-planar] surface of the elongated plate [backing] member is shaped to provide an approximately uniform-pressure portion when a compression force is applied to the first surface during an exercise.

9. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 6, further comprising [wherein the backing member comprises] a coupling assembly coupled to the back surface of the elongated plate member and being adapted to attach to an exercise machine.

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10. (Canceled):

11. (Canceled):

12. (Currently Amended): A pad assembly for an exercise machine, comprising:

a backing plate of approximately uniform thickness having front and back surfaces and being elongated in a first direction along a first axis, the backing plate being contoured such that the first axis forms a curve; and

a compressible member having a first surface adapted to engage a portion of a user's body and a second surface opposite from the first surface, the second surface being coupled to the front [adapted to engage a contoured backing] surface of the backing plate such that a compression force applied to the first surface provides an approximately uniform-thickness portion of the compressible member between the first surface and the [contoured] backing plate [surface].



25315
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13. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the second surface of the compressible member comprises a depressed portion adapted to fittingly engage at least a portion of the [contoured] backing plate [surface].

14. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the [contoured] backing plate [surface] comprises a contoured pad support projecting from a moveable portion of the exercise machine.

15. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the approximately uniform-thickness portion is co-extensive with a portion of the first surface adapted to contact the portion of the user's body.

16. (Currently Amended): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the [contoured] backing plate [surface] comprises a contoured portion having a radius of curvature within the range from approximately 1.5 inches to approximately 7.0 inches.

17. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the compressible member comprises a polyurethane member.

18. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein, when the compressible force is applied, the compressible member provides a first surface approximately corresponds with an anticipated shape of the portion of the user's body.

19. (Currently amended): A pad assembly for an exercise machine, comprising:
a layer of compressible padding having a first surface adapted to engage a portion of a user's body and a second surface opposite from the first surface; and
a backing structure attached to the layer of compressible padding and having an approximately uniform-thickness, the backing structure including a backing surface proximate the second surface and [, the backing surface] being shaped to provide an approximately



25315
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uniform-thickness portion of the layer of compressible padding when a compression force is applied to the first surface.

20. (Currently amended): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the backing structure [surface] is contoured such that the compression force is approximately uniformly distributed over the first surface.

21. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the approximately uniform-thickness portion is co-extensive with the first surface.

22. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the backing surface comprises a contoured portion having a radius of curvature within the range from approximately 1.5 inches to approximately 7.0 inches.

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23. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the backing structure comprises a channel attached to the backing structure opposite from the layer of compressible padding and adapted to attach to a support portion of an exercise machine.

24 – 35 (Cancelled)

36. (Currently amended): A method of exercising, comprising:
providing a compressible layer having a first surface, and a backing structure having an approximately uniform thickness and including a non-planar backing surface engaged against the compressible layer opposite the first surface; and
pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer between the portion of the user's body and the non-planar backing surface and to form an approximately uniform-thickness portion of the compressible layer therebetween.

37. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of



25315
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a user's body against the first surface to form an approximately uniform-thickness portion of the compressible layer that is co-extensive with the portion of the user's body.

38. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to form an approximately uniform-pressure distribution on the portion of the user's body.

39. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's leg against the first surface.

40. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's arm against the first surface.

41. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's shoulder against the first surface.



25315
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